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EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN
COUNTERINSURGENCY

by
John J. Shea

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Thesis Advisor	Gordon H. McCormick
Thesis Co-Advisor	James J. Wirtz

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John J. Shea
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B.A., American University, 1983

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Author: _____
John J. Shea

Approved By: _____
Gordon H. McCormick, Thesis Advisor

_____
James J. Wirtz, Second Reader

_____
Thomas Bruneau, Chairman, Department
of National Security Affairs

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to validate the systems model of insurgency and counterinsurgency by examining two case studies in counterinsurgency; the Emergency in Malaya from 1948-1960 and the ongoing war in El Salvador. One of these case studies proved to be a success, and one thus far has proved to be a failure. The paper's proposition is that successful counterinsurgency, as in Malaya, requires that the government view the insurgency as a "system" and attack each of the insurgency's components (inputs, conversion process, and outputs). Conversely, unsuccessful cases of counterinsurgency, such as in El Salvador, are those in which the government focuses exclusively on outputs. This study will attempt to validate this proposition by analyzing the conflicts in Malaya and El Salvador in similar terms using the systems model.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Since World War II and the development of nuclear deterrence, the United States has been successful in averting major war. Yet, while deterrence has worked at the upper end of the conflict spectrum, war and the resort to force at the lower end of the spectrum has not been deterred. Low intensity conflict is the most prevalent kind of war since 1945. This is especially true of one aspect of low intensity conflict, insurgency or internal war. As one observer has noted, "Of the 125 to 150 conflicts that have taken place in the past four decades, 90 percent occurred in developing regions and are best characterized by internal war." (Sereseres, 1985, p. 161) Nor is the situation liable to change in the future. The human and societal conditions that give rise to insurgency are likely to persist in many parts of the Third World. In addition, new pressures created by the end of the Cold War may generate new insurgencies in unexpected places.

For forty years, the Cold War not only held some nations together by force, it also enabled many weak states to survive far longer than they might have otherwise. With the end of the Cold War, what may become increasingly common are challenges to states from within--from ethnic, tribal, and religious groups dissatisfied with the shape or the content of their nations and ready to use force to bring about change. These

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groups are likely to resort to insurgency as a means of redefining their nations.

Such insurgencies can pose a challenge to the United States and its allies in several ways: as a political and economic threat to U.S. regional allies, as a direct threat to U.S. citizens, facilities and business operations in foreign lands, and through the potential creation of new regimes hostile to the interests of the United States or its local allies (Hosmer, 1990, p. 5). Because of the continuing challenge posed by insurgent organizations in the Third World, the United States must be prepared to support friendly governments facing such a threat. A central feature of such support must involve counterinsurgent strategic planning. This study is an effort to elaborate and explain one method by which a local counterinsurgency campaign might be carried out. Through an examination of the counterinsurgent campaigns in Malaya and El Salvador, it will provide a framework for counterinsurgent (COIN) forces to target an advanced insurgency.

For governments facing the threat of insurgency, a COIN strategy is often mistaken for a national strategy. The national strategy must address the fundamental grievances which are the social and economic roots of "people's wars." This must be accomplished through a unified strategy to enhance regime legitimacy, national economic growth, and internal security. Subordinated to this national plan is the

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counterinsurgent strategy, which is the military plan of action to counter the armed threat posed by the insurgent organization. This paper addresses only the military dimension of the larger national campaign. It presents a specific operational concept for defeating a guerrilla threat known as the "systems approach" to counterinsurgency. When applied to an insurgency, the model "illuminates the target" for COIN forces, giving form to and flushing out an enemy that must remain invisible to survive.

A. THE SYSTEMS MODEL OF INSURGENCY

The systems model of insurgency was developed by two RAND analysts, Nathan Leites and Charles Wolf, Jr., in their book Rebellion and Authority: An Analytic Essay on Insurgent Conflicts. The model views an insurgency as a "system" composed of three parts: inputs, a conversion mechanism, and outputs. To view an insurgent movement as a system is to emphasize the factors within the insurgent organization that influence its capabilities and growth. As the authors indicate:

> the central question...[the rebellion's] operations: now
> [the rebellion] obtains its supplies; what forms of
> coercion and persuasion are used to influence the
> population; how [the rebellion] makes payments and raises
> revenues....[The] inside of [the rebellion] is what needs
> to be studied. (Leites and Wolf, 1970, p. 40)

The system's view of insurgency holds that for an insurgent organization to function, it must, like any other

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organization, obtain certain inputs from either internal or external sources and then convert them into outputs or activities. Inputs into the insurgent system are the raw materials needed to make the insurgent machine operate. The principal, though not exclusive source of these inputs is the population, or more precisely, the covert insurgent infrastructure operating among the population. This infrastructure provides the insurgent with the manpower for his units, the food, medicine and shelter to support him, and the intelligence on government forces necessary for his safety. It also acts as the "shadow government" in the village, contesting the authority of the government and supplanting it when possible. In short, the insurgent infrastructure provides the inputs necessary to make the guerrilla organization work. To be sure, certain crucial resources--financing, initial training, cadres, and organizational counsel--may be provided by external sources. As the authors point out, "the mix between endogeny and exogeny is variable: it differs between different [rebellions], and in the same [rebellion] at different times." (Leites and Wolf, p. 33)

The inputs, once acquired, are then converted into outputs through a conversion process. As with any organization, the insurgent organization is likely to be broken out into component parts, each responsible for a different organizational function, e.g. ideological indoctrination,

training, logistics, communications, intelligence, etc. Young peasants must be taught how to operate as combatants and indoctrinated in the guerrilla ideology; a logistics system must be organized to provide the necessary supplies to the insurgency throughout its operational areas; a communications network linking the leadership with the rank and file must be established. The guerrilla organization's ability to manage these and related functions will play a crucial role in determining the success of the insurgency.

At the third level of the model are the outputs or activities of the insurgency. These include the overt military acts of the insurgents, such as sabotage, ambushes, and attacks on army posts, as well as the guerrilla's political outputs (the exercise of authority in areas controlled or contested by the insurgents and its ability to monitor and manage the population under its control). Political and military outputs are designed to increase the level of insurgent authority in the eyes of the population while decreasing the authority and legitimacy of the government. Additionally, successful operations will generate new inputs as weapons are captured, base areas are established and the movement garners new supporters from the population. A diagram of insurgency as a system appears in Figure 1.

B. THE COUNTERINSURGENT TASKS

Operationally, the systems model suggests four different tasks for COIN forces. The emphasis is on attacking the
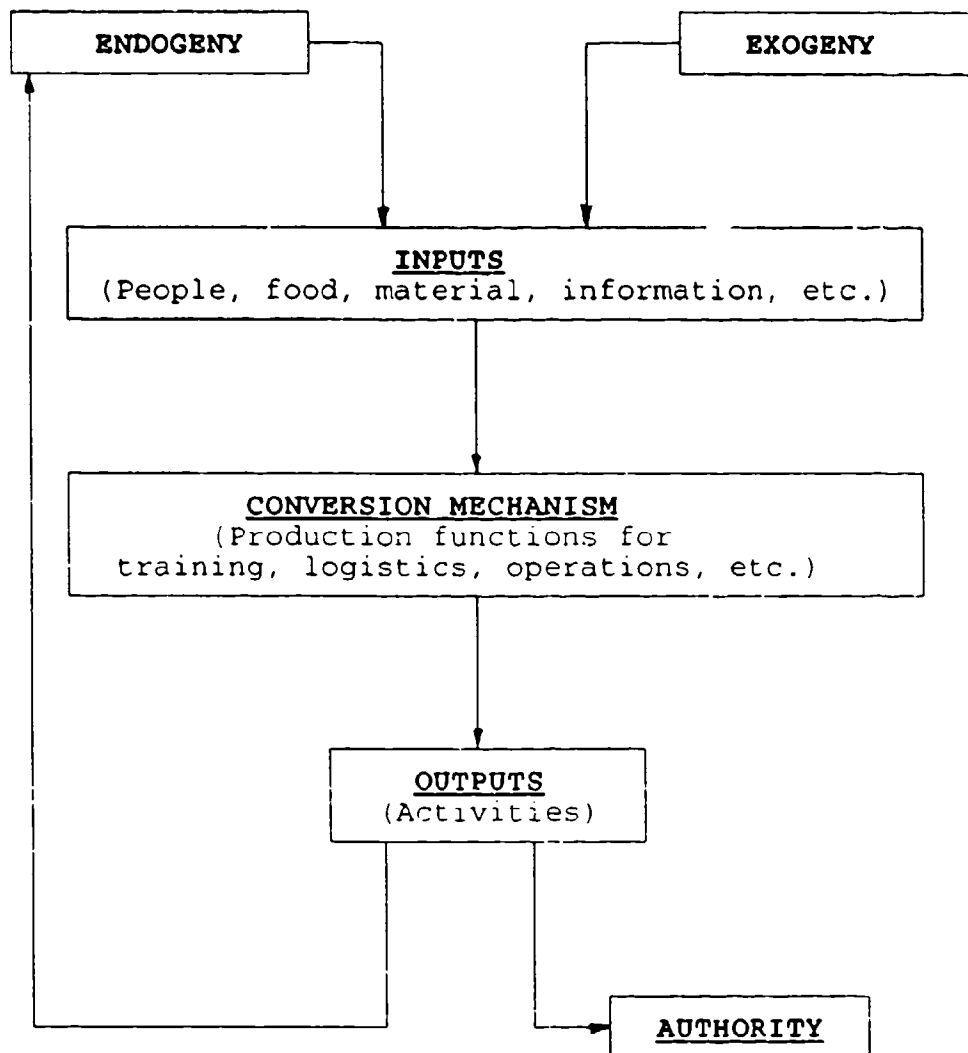
Figure 1. Insurgency as a System (Leites and Wolf, p.35)

insurgent organization and degrading its ability to obtain inputs and produce outputs. The tasks involve "intervention by the government at different phases in the insurgent system - that is, moving successively down the diagram of insurgent operations." (Leites and Wolf, p. 75)

The first responsibility is to control and diminish the supply of inputs to the insurgency. Since the principal source of inputs to the insurgent system comes from the people (Mao's "fish and water"), the insurgents must be cut off from their sources of supplies. This involves measures to control and defend the population so that the guerrilla infrastructure operating among the population can be isolated and attacked. The campaign against the insurgent infrastructure is the crucial task for COIN forces and its importance cannot be overstated. As Sir Robert Thompson, one of the most prominent authorities on guerrilla warfare writes:

> Unless the communist subversive political organization in the towns and villages is broken and eliminated, the insurgent guerrilla units will not be defeated. If the guerrillas can be isolated from the population... then their eventual destruction becomes automatic. (Thompson, 1966, p. 56)

Another renowned student and practitioner of insurgent warfare, Roger Trinquier, is in complete agreement:

> ...in modern warfare we are not just up against a few armed bands...but rather against an <u>armed clandestine organization</u> whose essential role is to impose its will on the population. Victory will be obtained only through the complete destruction of that organization. (Trinquier, 1961, p. 8-9)

By attacking the guerrilla organization, the government is targeting the heart of the insurgent system. As this organization is eliminated, the guerrillas, being short of supplies, recruits, and intelligence, will be forced to stand and fight (on government force terms) simply to remain intact.

The second task of COIN forces is to reduce the insurgent's efficiency in converting acquired inputs into outputs of the insurgent system. This is done by reducing the productivity of insurgent resources, as well as by forcing the guerrillas to divert resources from producing offensive operations to more defensive measures. Efforts aimed at this process include:

> ...creating distrust and frictions within [the rebellion's] organization by planting rumors; attracting defectors (particularly those from the higher ranks in [the rebellion's] civil and military organization); disseminating credible misinformation about the behavior of [the rebellion's] leadership; and generally raising the noise level in [the rebellion's] information system. (Leites and Wolf, p. 36)

Such measures can be augmented by efforts to target the insurgent leadership. The comandantes are high value targets for two reasons. First, because of their command abilities and activities as the guerrilla's "brain trust," leaders are more difficult to replace than the rank and file. Secondly, in many peoples' eyes, they are the "heart and soul" of the insurgency, and as such once eliminated cannot be replaced. The death or capture of middle and high level leaders would signal the demise of the insurgency to the population and would show that the government is the winning side.

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The third responsibility consists of hardening the government's mechanisms of social control, or increasing the government's capacity to absorb insurgent outputs. This is done in two ways. In the political realm, the government must show that it is capable of governing. As the authors describe:

> ...effective politics requires that [authority] demonstrate a growing capacity to govern--by adhering to and enforcing law and order; by maintaining discipline within and between its agencies; and by completing announced programs visibly and expeditiously (Leites and Wolf, p. 73).

The other aspect of hardening involves the beefing up of local defense capabilities and/or fortifying village areas against insurgent attack.

The final task for COIN forces is to target the insurgent forces [outputs] directly - counterforce. As the authors point out, the kinds of force in COIN differ from those required to meet conventional threats:

> ...to apply force effectively in insurgent conflicts, it [the government] must have capabilities much closer to [the rebellion's] than to the capability of conventional forces. Mobility, reconnaissance, small units... police and paramilitary forces are the important military elements for deterring or meeting the threat of [rebellion]--not armor, artillery, jet aircraft and large centralized operations.... (Leites and Wolf, p. 153-154)

The defending regime, however, must ensure that it does not adopt a strategy which focuses only on outputs. Unfortunately, because counterforce operations are "the traditional military task and the one best understood, most familiar, and typically preferred by the military," (Leites and Wolf, p. 81) it often becomes the primary COIN strategy of

a government confronting an insurgency. This is a mistake, due

to the differences between conventional and insurgent warfare.

In conventional war this is the proper strategy; once enough

of the enemy's forces are attrited his territory can be

occupied and eventually he will sue for peace. But in an

insurgency this calculus does not apply. A counterforce

strategy will rarely be debilitating to an insurgency, as

Krepinevich explains:

> First, the insurgents have no need to engage the
> government forces-they are not fighting to hold territory.
> Second, as long as government forces are out seeking
> battle with the guerrilla units, the insurgents are not
> forced to fight to maintain access to the people.
> Therefore, <u>the initiative remains with the guerrillas</u>--
> they can "set" their own level of casualties...thus
> rendering ineffective all efforts by the counterinsurgent
> forces to win a traditional military victory.
> (Krepinevich, 1986, p. 11)

Rather than designating guerrilla forces as the primary

target, the population that supports the guerrillas and the

inputs it receives should be the focus of a counterinsurgency.

This is precisely the counsel of the systems model, as Leites

and Wolf explain:

> ...[the authority's] aim should be to attack [the
> rebellion's] organization, that is, to attack the apparatus
> by which the forces and outputs of the system are produced.
> (Leites and Wolf, p. 84) [the rebellion's] armed forces are
> not <u>un</u>important for [the authority's] targeting, but they
> are <u>less</u> important than [the rebellion's] organization and
> logistics network in reducing [the rebellion's]
> effectiveness. (Leites and Wolf, p. 78)

As the model makes clear, insurgent outputs are only one

third of the insurgent system. A COIN effort that focuses on

outputs alone [counterforce strategy] is addressing only a

fraction of the insurgency. Such a strategy is condemned to fight the insurgency at the margin, and is unlikely to directly defeat an enemy engaged in revolutionary guerrilla warfare. Moreover the counterinsurgent forces, under these circumstances, are forced to adopt a reactive posture, thus ceding the initiative to the insurgents. The critical components of the insurgent system for COIN forces are the inputs it receives and the apparatus by which insurgent activities are supported and generated. Rather than attempting to destroy guerrilla forces, the emphasis is placed on attacking the guerrilla organization and how it obtains and manages inputs from the population. This will have an indirect, but ultimately decisive impact on outputs. By directing the counterinsurgent effort at the guerrilla organization, or infrastructure, the insurgent is cut off from the support of the people, and it is the people who fulfill the central role of providing him with the manpower for his units, the food, medicine and shelter to support him, and the intelligence on government forces necessary for his safety. As Thompson notes:

> The mere killing of insurgents, without the simultaneous destruction of their infrastructure, is a waste of effort because...all casualties will be made good by new recruits. (Thompson, p. 116)

In sum, the model suggests that waging a successful counterinsurgency campaign requires that primary attention be devoted to the counterproduction effort rather than the counterforce effort. The objective should be to attack the

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apparatus by which forces and outputs of the system are produced.

C. CRITICISMS OF THE MODEL

Some observers have criticized the systems model of insurgency, calling it "immoral, based on a strategy of coercion." (Shafer, 1988, p. 127-132) These criticisms are based on Leites and Wolf's discussion of coercion as an instrument used by both government and insurgents to control the population. Leites and Wolf do examine the uses of coercion, but they do not advocate it. They merely identify it as one of the tools available for use to both sides. As Chalmers Johnson rightly concludes:

> ...although [Leites and Wolf] do not specifically advocate it...a reader...might get the idea from their work that counterinsurgency is most effective when understood as a process of raising the costs to the peasantry of supporting the guerrillas. (Johnson, 1973, p. 42)

Most importantly, such criticism wrongly suggests that coercion is somehow integral to the systems model of insurgency. These analyses fail to recognize the two distinct discussions by Leites and Wolf, one on coercion, the other concerning the model itself. As the following chapters will make clear, the systems model provides a way to defeat an insurgency by attacking the guerrilla organization, not coercing the population. Moreover, a strategy targeted against the infrastructure reduces collateral damage because it relies on discriminate force to neutralize the enemy, not the massive

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firepower of conventional operations which invariably generates high civilian casualties.

D.   MODEL APPLIED TO MALAYA

Interpreting the British campaign in Malaya using the model, we find that the British attacked inputs in the following ways: they separated the guerrillas from the population through a resettlement program which provided security and rural development to those preyed upon by the insurgents; they registered the population through identification cards and travel permits which made it difficult for guerrillas to move freely in the rural areas; they instituted food control and food denial measures which prevented food from getting to the insurgents.

In attacking the conversion process, the British launched a psychological warfare campaign using leaflets, radio announcements, and "voice aircraft" to reduce the moral of the guerrilla ranks and increase internal conflicts within the insurgent organization. A rewards for surrender program neutralized a large number of guerrillas and also provided a steady flow of intelligence on the insurgency. The government also attacked the conversion process directly with aerial spraying of the insurgent jungle gardens.

The British hardened the government against the insurgents through the creation and expansion of local militia to guard the new settlements. The militia augmented the army units and

served as the barrier between the insurgents and the population. The new settlements provided a venue for successful development assistance which touched the lives of many who previously existed outside the reach of the government.

And finally, the COIN forces attacked outputs using small unit operations. But even here, input denial became the chief basis for counterforce operations. Using these tactics, the government defeated the communist insurgents in Malaya. Ever since, the British experience has been lauded as a model of successful counterinsurgency. As the Malayan case illustrates, successful tactics in insurgent conflicts aimed at counterproduction: to impair the ability of the rebellion to produce and reproduce forces. "The organization of the insurgents and its interface with the population is the crucial target for the government's military and political efforts--not the insurgent forces themselves, or the transient territorial base from which they operate." (Leites and Wolf, p. 154)

E. MODEL APPLIED TO EL SALVADOR

The COIN campaign in El Salvador was much different. We find that the government did not attack the entire insurgent system. Instead, the El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) began with a counterforce strategy against the insurgents and retained it, despite the insurgent's shift in tactics to guerrilla revolutionary war in 1985. Attempts were made to

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attack the insurgency as a system, but they failed due to ESAF neglect and a preoccupation with the counterforce effort. The ESAF never fully accepted the attempt to control inputs through civil defense, and it failed due to a lack of attention, resources, and support. Refugees and displaced persons were ignored and became a key source of insurgent support both in El Salvador and across the border in Honduras. The critical issue of external support to the insurgency [exogeny] was never a priority for the ESAF. This is demonstrated by the low priority given to the two services charged with interdicting external supplies, the navy and customs service. Attempts to harden the government and provide services to the population through civic action have floundered, due to ESAF failure to provide security to the population. The result is a costly stalemate in a protracted war.

In the following sections we will apply the systems model to the counterinsurgency campaigns in Malaya and El Salvador. In Chapter 2, an examination of the Malayan case will reveal that the British were successful because they did exactly what the model prescribes: a COIN campaign concentrated on denying inputs and attacking the organization of the insurgency. In Chapter 3, we will see how the ESAF has failed to defeat the insurgency because of an output oriented strategy which neglected to include an assault on guerrilla inputs and infrastructure. Chapter 4 will compare and contrast the cases,

bringing out differences and identifying areas for further research.

II.   THE MALAYAN INSURGENCY

Communism came to Malaya in the 1920s when Party organizers from Indonesia arrived, following Moscow's orders to penetrate the West's colonial territories. The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) was founded in 1931 and was made up by the ethnic Chinese community who did not benefit from British colonial rule.

When Japan invaded Malaya in February 1942, the Chinese Communists seized the opportunity to become the chief organization of nationalist resistance. The Party withdrew into the jungle and organized a guerrilla movement. Since it was the only organized force in opposition to the Japanese, the British armed and trained the MCP during the war. The 5000 man Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) conducted harassing activities behind Japanese lines during World War II.

By the end of the war, almost all possible political opposition had been removed by the MCP, and a powerful force had been trained and organized in guerrilla operations. The MCP emerged from the jungle as victors and were received as such by the population. Prevented by the returning British forces from gaining a military hold on the peninsula, the Party was permitted to operate and became a recognized force with the ability to organize front groups and dominate the trade union movement. Using its union power, the MCP fomented labor agitation and strikes to bring down the government. In

1947 there were 291 strikes, involving 69,000 men and the loss of nearly 700,000 man-days. In May 1948 alone, the number of man-days lost rose to 178,500 (Komer, 1972, p.5). The British countered by placing controls on MCP activity, arresting and deporting key leaders, and encouraging union development outside of Communist control.

In the spring of 1948, following a period of labor unrest, demonstrations, and sabotage, the MCP retreated into the jungle and began to mount armed attacks against the government. The MPAJA reactivated its former members, signed on new recruits, and uncovered its weapons caches established during the war against Japan. This new army, now called the Malayan Races' Liberation Army (MRLA), found a ready source of food, recruits, and information among the Chinese communities. It established a political and logistics organization among the rural Chinese villages known as the Min Yuen, or Mass Organization, which would provide logistics support to the combat forces in the jungle. On June 19, 1948 the Federation declared a state of emergency. The British and Malayan governments ultimately mobilized a total of 40,000 regular troops, 60,000 police, and about a quarter of a million Home Guards, who were responsible for village defense. MRLA strength ranged from 8000 at the height of the Emergency to an inconsequential number by the war's end in 1960. The Min Yuen numbered about 40,000.
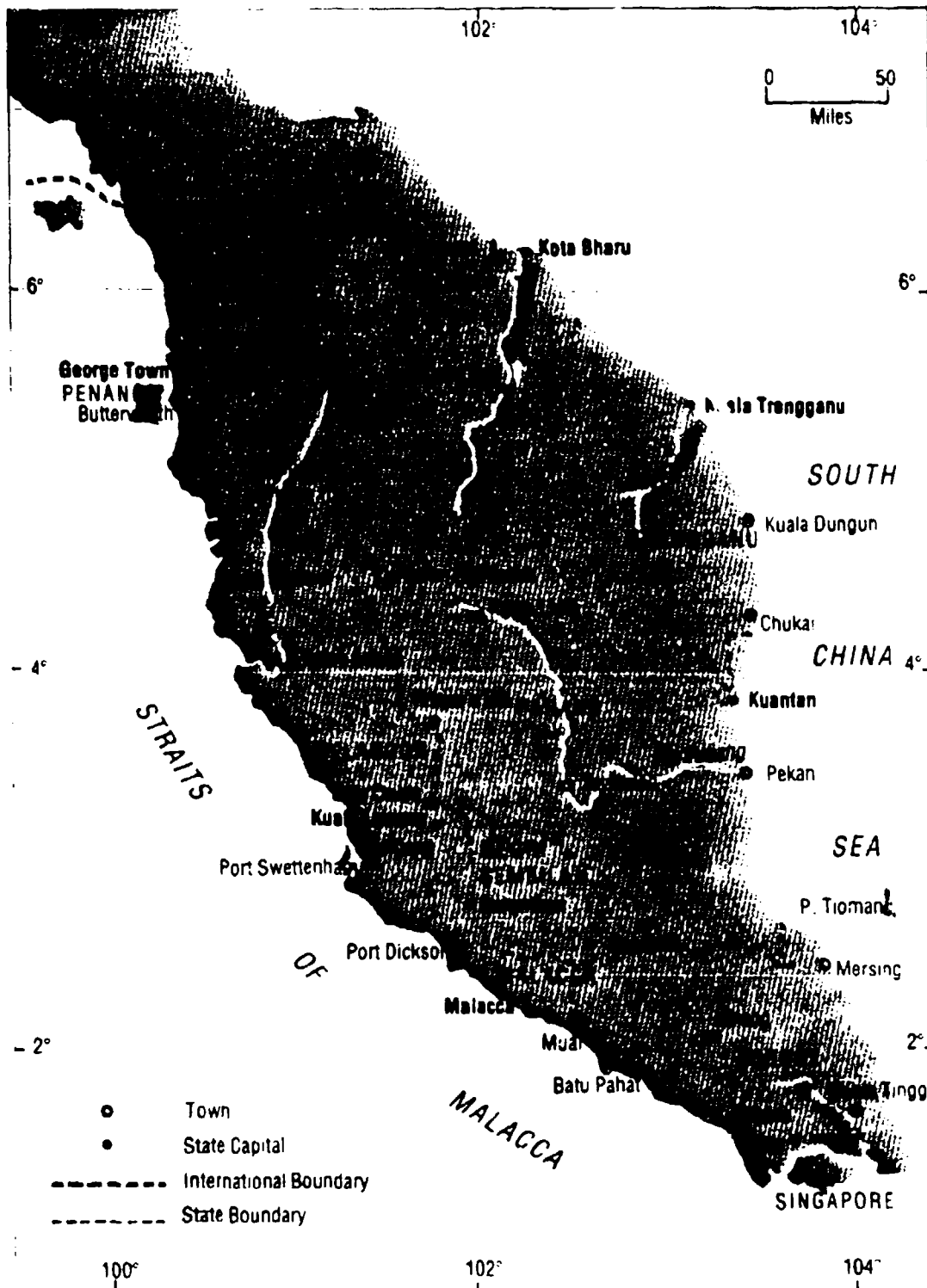
Malaya at the time of the Emergency

During the first two years of the war, the British relied on conventional military measures to put down the rebellion. Triple canopy jungle and a 6,000 foot mountain range down the backbone of the country made movement very difficult. It took some crack British battalions from three to six months of combing operations before they were able to report any guerrilla casualties or prisoners. It was clear that a conventional offensive strategy was simply not suited to an elusive jungle foe who was committed to protracted war.

A. APPLYING THE SYSTEMS MODEL

By early 1950, the British had recognized that they were making little or no headway against the MRLA. They were beginning to see that the key to success was to isolate the guerrilla force from the population by attacking its inputs and logistics organization. The Briggs Plan, named after General Sir Harold Briggs, the first director of Operations in Malaya, was put into operation in 1951. Its aim was fourfold: to dominate the populated areas and create a feeling of security among the population that would result in increased intelligence on the insurgents; to break up the communist organization within the populated areas; to isolate the guerrillas from their supply organization in the populated areas; and to destroy the guerrilla force by making them attack the security forces on terrain of their choosing. The

Briggs plan was a strategy based on counterproduction, not counterforce.

In the terminology of the systems model, the Briggs strategy was aimed at the inputs to the MRLA (populated areas, food and supplies) and its conversion mechanism (organization). In practice, this policy was aimed at inputs through the resettlement of the population providing support to the insurgents, the registration of the population to separate law abider from law breaker, and the control of food that forced the MRLA to expose itself to government forces. Likewise, the government targeted the conversion mechanism of the guerrilla force through psychological campaigns that sought to induce the insurgent to surrender and crop spraying, which targeted the production mechanism directly. This strategy resulted in the defeat of the communist insurgents. The British experience is heralded as a model of a success il counterinsurgency campaign.

1. Attacking Insurgent Inputs and Infrastructure

As the systems model suggests, one of the primary tasks of government forces should be the denial of inputs to the insurgency. This means the control of domestic resources and population. Chief among the measures taken by the British was resettlement of those people offering sympathy and support to the guerrillas. The fundamental aim of the resettlement program was to isolate the insurgent both physically and

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politically from the population which housed the organization and infrastructure so vital to the guerrillas' existence.

a. The Squatters

The primary target of the resettlement program was the rural Chinese squatters who accounted for about ten percent of the Malayan population. They were referred to as squatters because they were often illegal occupants of the land. This jungle-fringe community was primarily the result of two causes: the cyclic economic downturns in Malaya which forced unemployed laborers to leave the city and eke out a subsistence living; and the exodus from the cities of those seeking to escape Japanese persecution during the occupation of World War II. The villages grew up where the people could find a plot of land to grow food. It was upon this pool of rural Chinese that the guerrillas relied for much of their support.

Quite obviously, not everyone in these villages was a guerrilla supporter. As one observer has noted, "It is a great guerrilla warfare fallacy that there are great numbers eager to drop what they are doing and join the guerrillas to fight for the cause." (Clutterbuck, 1966, p. 81) In Malaya, the guerrilla infrastructure in the villages was embodied in the Min Yuen, or "Mass Organization." A Min Yuen member was typically a resident of the squatter village recruited by the MCP. Together with other members, they provided the MRLA units in the field with food, money, intelligence, and recruits, the

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inputs the guerrilla system needed to operate. They also provided communications for the separated MRLA units through a system of jungle mailboxes. Min Yuen cells operated within the villages, moving among the people, organizing opposition to the government. They were made up by both full-time and part-time cadre. Many were issued arms and became the MRLA's auxiliary fighting units. Estimates vary, but it is generally believed that there were 30,000-40,000 Min Yuen in the early part of the insurgency. In short, the Min Yuen was the "parallel hierarchy" in the village, contesting the authority of the government and supplanting it when possible. As long as this subversive infrastructure remained in place, the insurgents could move freely in and out of the village and convert, if not compel, other civilians to their cause. In the spring of 1950, the British were losing because they could not control the source of guerrilla inputs--the squatters (Clutterbuck, p.55).

It was this infrastructure that the government sought to destroy. The decision to resettle the Chinese squatters struck at the primary source of inputs to the insurgency. As we have seen, the MRLA's logistics and support organizations were operating from these villages. By divorcing the guerrilla from the structure that provided him with food, information, recruits, and material, the government robbed him of his support base and made him fight to regain it.

Resettlement would become the most effective program of the war.

The resettlement task involved about 423,000 squatters. The "New Villages" were surrounded by fences with controlled access and were located in defensible positions near where people worked. Village defense units were formed to monitor the settlements and defend them against insurgent attack. Schools, dispensaries, markets, electric lights, and other facilities were provided.(Komer, p.55) Once the infrastructure of the village was completed, the people were ready to move in.

The round up and movement of the squatters was a large military operation that required stealth and secrecy. "Usually the squatter camp was surrounded before dawn by police and army units, who then moved in to remove the people, their goods and livestock by truck. In the screening process the police invariably discovered and arrested wanted communists and terrorists. The government paid compensation for any loss suffered in the move."(O'Ballance, 1966, p.110)

The resettlement effort was not, however, without problems. Because the authorities were mostly concerned with security, some of the village sites lacked accessible water and arable land for the farmers. There was also an initial shortage of qualified staff to administer the villages. The most important problem facing the resettled population was the disruption to their livelihood. Compensation for the loss of

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crops and livestock was often paid late. In addition, some farmers did not receive land that was equivalent in size to their previous plots. The government responded to the problems with improvements to the basic services in the New Villages. Spending on education, which the Chinese value greatly, was increased, as was spending on health services, infant welfare centers, and dispensaries. The upheaval of relocation was also mitigated by the Korean War boom.

The government received an unexpected boost following the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950. The war increased demand worldwide for many raw materials. Prices for the two pillars of the Malayan economy--rubber and tin-- were catapulted to record heights. Export duties on these primary products, along with increased revenues from individual and company taxes filled the government's coffers. In 1950, the estimate for total revenue was put at $273.7 million; the sum actually received was $443.4 million. Similarly, the estimate for 1951 was $410.3 million while the sum actually received was $735.4 million (Stubbs, 1989, p. 109). The government put this unexpected money to work fighting the insurgency through increased funding for the police force, the resettlement program, and health and education programs. Direct expenditures on Emergency operations went from $82 million in 1949 to $101 million in 1950 and to $217 million in 1951 (Stubbs, p.109).

The economic boom did not benefit the government alone, it aided all Malayans. The expansion of the rubber and tin industries meant labor was in great demand, and wages rose spectacularly. Even the wages of an unskilled field worker increased from $1.43 per day in the first quarter of 1950 to a record high of $2.90 per day in the second quarter of 1951 (Stubbs, p. 110). The new prosperity also tended to distract the people's attention away from the insurgents' cause. Too many rubber tappers, complained one MCP propaganda pamphlet, were spending their money in cinemas, and drinking and gambling, and participating in other forms of the corrupt life of capitalism (Stubbs, p. 110).

The resettlement program drove a wedge between the population and the logistical organization of the guerrillas. A boundary line was established which, over time, would cut off the guerrillas from their main source of supplies and information. The insurgents recognized the danger of the resettlement scheme and reacted violently against it. Villages were attacked and policemen, government collaborators, and resettlement officers were murdered. But a growing segment of the population was becoming disenchanted with the guerrillas. For the first time, the government was protecting the people. For many former squatters, the New Villages meant local development and a chance to integrate into a growing economy. Therefore, they had a vested interest in the future of the government. By 1951, the MRLA acknowledged that they were not

winning the support of the people through intimidation. In October the guerrilla leadership issued a directive ordering that while attacks on government officials, police posts and active collaborators would continue, the guerrillas were, under no circumstances, to attack innocent people, either at work or in the villages (Clutterbuck, p. 63). Following the announcement, guerrilla attacks fell off by more than fifty percent. Moreover, their inability to propagandize and intimidate the people left them isolated and dependent upon their own resources. The isolation was increased using the food control program initiated by the government.

    b. Food Control

As the resettlement progressed, the British implemented a program designed to deny the insurgent another key input, food. The food control and food denial operations, begun in June 1951, were designed to deprive the MRLA of its sources of food and other essentials such as clothing and medicine. Curfews restricted the legal use of roads to daylight hours, road and rail traffic were subject to inspection, and there were spot checks. Fines and jail terms were meted out to those who were caught transporting food without a permit. Village shopkeepers had to account for all stocks and sales, cans of food were punctured at the time of sale to ensure their immediate consumption, and sales could only be made to people with ID cards. In addition, the New Villagers were subject to a body search every time they left

the village. Some food was smuggled out in bicycle frames, false bottoms in buckets and in clothing. But the inspections gradually improved and interdicted valuable food destined for the guerrillas.

The controls program was slow to affect the insurgents. They had hidden stocks and caches of food and some un-relocated squatters could still be relied on to provide a little rice. But as the resettlement program progressed and food control was more strictly enforced, the MRLA began to feel the pinch.

Moreover, while there remained individuals willing to help the communists and risk being caught because of their family or friendship ties, personal grievances, or intimidation, the system of food control gave others an excuse for not siding with the guerrillas (Stubbs, p. 167). Because the people were now living in the New Villages guarded by the village defense force, they were generally protected from reprisals.

c. Food Denial

Areas under heavy guerrilla influence became the focus of concentrated programs known as Operation Starvation. The purpose of food denial operations was to destroy a specific guerrilla target by completely interrupting its supplies so that the guerrilla force, weakened by hunger, was forced to surrender or be captured or killed by the Security Forces.

Food denial operations were normally mounted in three phases. Phase one was usually a one to three month intelligence buildup on the designated area. In phase two, the operation itself began with an intensification of food control and pressure from the Security Forces. Phase three was designed to exploit the insurgents' loss of morale and the increased flow of intelligence produced by ambushes conducted by the Security Forces, patrols, and attacks on insurgent camps.(Short, 1975, p. 376)

These types of operations directly attacked the inputs of the insurgent system. The MRLA could live off of hidden food for a while, but eventually these supplies ran out and the guerrillas could not exist without the support of the Min Yuen. However, through tight control of food supplies, the timid or reluctant supplier was given an excuse for not providing anything to the guerrillas. Thus, the hardcore supporters were forced to take greater risks (more frequent trips carrying rice which established patterns of movement). As a result, they were more likely to be spotted by the Security Forces. Once captured, a number of the Min Yuen could be convinced to "turn" and provide information on the shadow government in the village and information about guerrilla rendezvous points, camps and operating patterns. This information was needed to root out the insurgent base. Armed with this intelligence, village police could arrest or ambush other cadre. These operations generated significant

intelligence on the guerrilla organization, which enabled government forces to identify and neutralize the guerrillas.

Intelligence created by the food denial operations also helped government forces to target and destroy the MRLA through the creation of killing grounds. Guerrillas were discouraged from operating outside these zones by tight food control and saturation patrolling. Conversely, inside these zones, food controls were relaxed and patrols kept out. Guerrillas would thus move freely and contact their suppliers, including the ones who had secretly betrayed them. This would lead to refined targeting information for ambushes and other small unit operations. The impact on the insurgent infrastructure and combat capability was devastating. According to Lucian Pye:

> approximately three out of every five people under the
> party's control have had to devote all their time and
> energies to the logistical problem, and increasingly in
> many areas all the people have had to concentrate on
> getting supplies. (Leites and Wolf, p. 77)

Edgar O'Ballance also noted:

> Its [MRLA] personnel were estimated to be spending nine-
> tenths of their time and energy obtaining food. To get
> food, the insurgents were force to take more risks, and in
> the process exposed themselves to the Security Forces,
> thus suffering correspondingly more casualties. (p. 137)

Ambushes based on such intelligence eventually destroyed the armed guerrilla units in the jungle. This had a profound effect on the people, as Clutterbuck recounts the scene after one successful operation:

> ... the police had laid down the five bodies outside the
> police post. The people filed past. As they counted the

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bodies and recognized their faces, their attitudes changed. Every guerrilla was dead, and the threat was gone - and they knew which was the winning side. They began to talk freely, and all that remained of the Masses organization was quickly rounded up. (Clutterbuck, 1973, p.250)

d. Registration

Another key measure instituted by the government was the establishment of national registration and the issue of identity cards to everyone over the age of 12. By March 1949, some form of ID card had been issued to everyone registered, some 3,220,000 (Komer, p.34). Citizens had an incentive to keep and protect the card, for they needed it to buy food, find space in a resettled village, or to obtain a grant to build a house. Frequent police identity checks, in which the village was cordoned off and everyone scrutinized, identified people not residing in the village. Also, any absences were noted for subsequent investigation. In this way, the government separated the guerrillas from the people and impeded the Min Yuen's ability to operate within the village. Known guerrillas and overt members of the guerrilla organization (MCP hierarchy) were forced out of the towns and into the jungle. The guerrillas tried to disrupt the system, but the government thwarted these attempts.

Registration also worked at a more subtle level. It created a bond between the government and the law abiding citizen, in that the former was made aware that it had a responsibility to all carded citizens. The citizen, living in one of the New Villages and carrying an ID card, was made

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aware of the presence of the government. For many of the former squatters, this was the first time they were included among those who were governed and protected by the state.

2. Attacking the Conversion Process

Related to the task of reducing inputs to the insurgent system is that of impeding the way the insurgent organization converts inputs into outputs. As discussed in Chapter 1, conversion can be divided into two subtasks: forcing the guerrilla organization to divert resources from offensive operations to self-sustaining activities; and reducing the effectiveness of the insurgent production process. The British implemented programs that addressed both aspects of the conversion process. Crop spraying by the Royal Air Force (RAF) fell into the former category while the government's rewards for surrender program addressed both.

a. Crop Spraying

By 1953, food control and food denial operations were hurting the guerrillas' ability to operate. In response, the MRLA started cultivating jungle gardens. As they were detected the RAF began spraying these gardens with poison. If spraying failed to destroy the garden, then troops were called in to uproot the plants. This provides an excellent example of the government targeting the production mechanism directly. Such actions strike at the heart of the organization's conversion process and serve to weaken it. Although not used in the Malayan case, attacks on other conversion mechanisms,

for example, training facilities, would also disrupt the organization.

b. Psychological Operations

The psychological warfare campaign was intended to induce the guerrillas to surrender. To be successful, the government had to overcome the two primary fears that prevented many insurgents from surrendering: the fear of disciplinary action, if discovered by their leaders, and the fear of maltreatment by the government forces. MCP propaganda emphasized the latter possibility.

The government overcame these impediments by showing the guerrilla how to surrender and how they could reap financial rewards in doing so. Leaflet drops and voice aircraft were used to communicate messages from members of local units who had surrendered, telling the guerrillas they were wasting their lives and calling on specific individuals to give themselves up. (O'Ballance, p.134)

The centerpiece of the government's psychological campaign was the "rewards for surrender" program. Rewards were given to insurgents who surrendered, to those who brought them in (dead or alive) or for information which led to the capture or killing of a guerrilla. Rewards ranged from US $28,000.00 for the chairman of the Central Committee of the MCP down to US $875.00 for an ordinary soldier (Komer, p. 73). The program began slowly, but once the first guerrillas came in and word of their surrender spread, the number of surrendered

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increased. In 1949, a total of 251 insurgents surrendered. In 1953, the program hit a high with 372. By the end of the war, a total of 2,702 insurgents had surrendered (Komer, p. 74).

The impact on the guerrillas was indisputable. The MCP made it a capital offense to even pick up a government surrender leaflet. The possibility of treachery by a former comrade began to spread mistrust among the insurgent ranks. It also led to a degradation in the efficiency of the guerrilla organization as "...the high command went to extraordinary lengths to maintain control over their followers. Checks, controls and inquisition multiplied; sentries watched sentries; watchers watched everyone. It will never be possible to calculate the loss of productivity which followed." (Komer, p. 75) In addition, these attempts to maintain control, and the occasional execution of a guerrilla eroded peoples' confidence in the insurgents' cause.

It was especially valuable to attract defectors from the leadership ranks of the insurgency, since these individuals tended to have a greater impact on the organization than the rank and file. If a local leader could be captured or induced to surrender, this often meant that his unit would collapse as an effective fighting force. Moreover, the demise of such a leader also caused villagers to conclude that the government was the winning side and they would provide additional information on the Min Yuen or guerrilla units operating in the area. By attacking the leaders, the

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British were able to degrade the insurgency's command and control, and thus weaken one of the "critical nodes" of the conversion process.

Thus, the propaganda campaign against the guerrillas served to divert resources and impair the insurgent organization's productivity. In doing so, it made them vulnerable to attack.

3. Hardening the Government

A government hardens itself by increasing its capacity to absorb insurgent outputs. The creation of the New Villages and expansion of the Home Guard provided the population and the local government with the physical security needed to repel attacks by the MRLA. The New Villages were surrounded by high fences and their perimeters were lighted at night. Access was strictly controlled, and everyone was subject to search.

The New Villages also provided a venue for economic development. It moved the poorest segment of the population into areas with roads, sewage, water, and electricity. Schools, clinics, and other government services measurably improved the standard of living for the contested population. These settlements brought economic benefits as well as security to the people's lives, and contributed to a reorientation of thinking toward the government and away from the MRLA.

Equally important were the Home Guard. The militia was generally ineffective at first, due to the government's

refusal to arm them properly. Many British officers were apprehensive about arming the resettled Chinese, feeling that any arms and ammunition supplied to them would simply be handed over to the guerrillas. In an important decision, the government decided to take the risk and arm the Home Guard units with shotguns. The decision paid off. The loss of arms was extremely limited, and by 1952 the Chinese Home Guard of over 50,000 had units in nearly every new village. (Stubbs, p. 158) Most importantly, the Chinese community was impressed that the government had the confidence in them to permit them to arm. This action helped to unite the government and the Chinese population against the insurgents.

4. Attacking Insurgent Outputs

The final aspect of counterinsurgency is counterforce. The British initially struggled finding the right kinds of force to use against the MRLA. In the beginning of the war the emphasis was on operating in conventional large-unit formations. As Clutterbuck noted, "the predilection of some army officers for major operations seems incurable." (Komer, p. 50) The British recognized the need to shift to small-unit operations, and by 1952 many units had made the change in their tactics. However, the real success of counterforce operations came when they were associated with and directly supported the counterproduction strategy of food denial. These operations involved the use of soldiers to cordon off a selected area which was then subjected to food rationing, the

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central cooking of rice in community kitchens, and searches of
all villagers each time they left the village. Eventually,
after their food caches ran out, the guerrillas in the
cordoned area were forced to expose themselves as they tri d
to obtain food from the village. Government patrols a ·'
ambushes were then able to exact a heavy toll, and this in
turn convinced others to surrender in increasing numbers. "The
[guerrillas] citing hunger as their reason for surrendering
rose from none in 1949-1951 to 29 percent in January-February
1955." (Komer, p. 61) By 1953, these operations had proved to
be so successful that it was noted, "For the remaining years
of the Emergency, patrol, ambush... inspections, cordon, and
watch-and-ward activities associated with food denial became
the major occupations of the Security Forces." (Komer, 59)

In the end, the counterforce strategy that worked best
for the British was one that supported the primary thrust of
the COIN campaign, the attack on the inputs to the insurgent
system. An illustration of the systems model applied to Malaya
appears in Figure 2.

B. SUCCESS IN MALAYA

The British counterinsurgent campaign in Malaya was
successful because the government directed its efforts against

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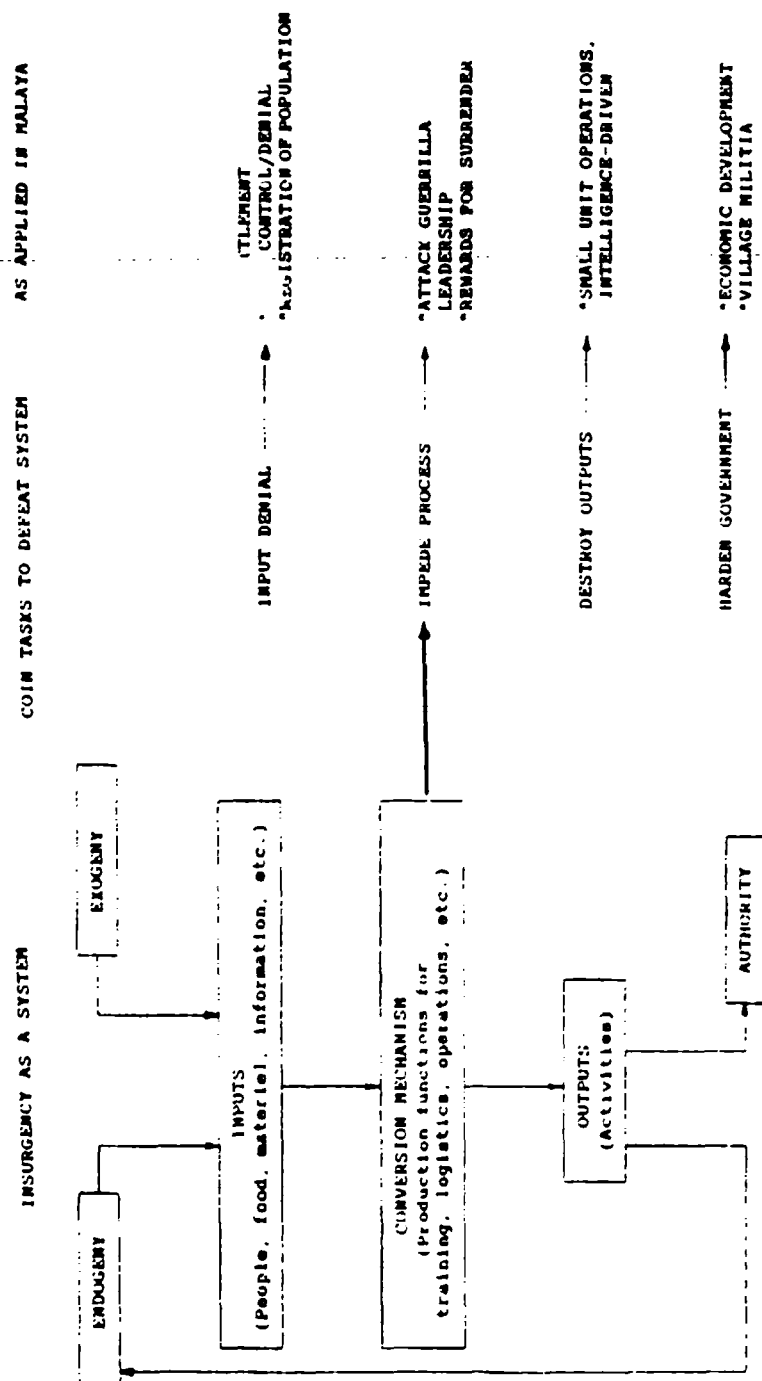
Figure 2. The Systems Model Applied to Malaya

the guerrilla organization and the inputs on which that infrastructure depended. By attacking the insurgency in this way, the guerrilla was cut off from the support network which provided him with the manpower for his units, the food, medicine and shelter necessary for his safety. He was forced to emerge from the safety of the jungle and fight the government forces on their own ground, and it was there that he was killed or captured. The government recognized that insurgent forces, or outputs, were only a third of the insurgent system. This recognition led to a strategy that attacked all three components of the system, and this is what ultimately accounted for the defeat of the insurgents.

We now turn to an examination of the war in El Salvador and the counterinsurgent strategy used by the government forces.

III. THE WAR IN EL SALVADOR

In the early 1970s, chronic political, economic, and social tensions generated the current crisis in El Salvador. In the 1972 Presidential elections, the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) candidate Jose Napoleon Duarte defeated the Army's choice, Colonel Arturo Armando Molina, but the military intervened on Molina's behalf and Duarte was beaten and exiled. This overt subversion of the election process created political turmoil. The legitimacy of the government eroded and the deposed opposition elements became more radicalized and confronted the government with violence. Focusing their activities in urban areas, the rebels conducted a campaign of civil disobedience, kidnapping for ransom, and political assassination. Student, campesino, and labor organizations began to collaborate with each other to topple the government (Baloyra, 1982, p.1). The ruling elite and the military responded with the use of death squads. As the military government under Colonel Molina and his successor, General Carlos Humberto Romero, became more repressive, support for radical solutions grew. By 1979, the situation was "beyond control by repression." (Manwaring and Prisk, 1988, p. 29) The momentum of demonstrations, strikes, occupations, and guerrilla attacks had brought the regime to the verge of collapse. On October 15, 1979, reform-minded Salvadoran

El Salvador

Legend:
- International boundary
- Department boundary
- ★ National capital
- ● Department capital
- Railroad
- Road

Scale: 0 10 20 30 Kilometers / 0 10 20 30 Miles

Pacific Ocean

Golfo de Fonseca

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officers, mindful of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and fearful for the future of the army, launched a coup and fashioned a new military-civilian junta. For the next several months, the government was thrown into turmoil as juntas rose and then collapsed, each unable to establish a viable coalition or control the violence from the left or right. The fourth junta, formed in January 1980, brought together the military and the PDC in a tenuous alliance and initiated reforms in banking, land, and commodities.

Meanwhile, insurgent cooperation and organization improved with the unification of the five guerrilla factions under the Farabundo Marti Liberation Movement (FMLN). The five different organizations-the Moscow-oriented Armed Forces of Liberation (FAL) and Popular Liberation Forces (FPL), the Socialist Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN), the Maoist People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), and the Trotskyite Central American Workers Revolutionary Party (PRTC)- united as a condition of support by Fidel Castro (Manwaring and Prisk, p.119). The insurgents were encouraged by the chaos in the streets, the success of the Sandinistas in neighboring Nicaragua, and the government's problems in implementing reforms. Believing that the people would rise up in mass support, the insurgents launched the "final offensive" in January 1981, only to find that they had overestimated their degree of popular support. They also underestimated the ability of the ESAF to defend the cities.

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The failure of the final offensive forced the insurgent leadership to reassess its strategy. Despite the setback, the FMLN had the men, equipment, and external support to conduct almost continuous military operations from 1981 to the end of 1984. Insurgent manpower reached its peak of 13,000 armed combatants at this stage. The guerrillas moved from the cities to the countryside and began to conduct major, conventional-type attacks against strategic economic and military targets. The FMLN held the initiative and operated freely in many parts of the country. However, increased U.S. military assistance resulted in the rapid expansion, equipping, and training of the ESAF. Troop strength increased from 10,000 in 1979 to approximately 56,000 by 1987 (Bacevich, 1988, p.5). Benefiting from U.S. arms, training, and a greater resource base than the guerrillas, the military was able to turn the fighting around. By 1985 the FMLN was forced to switch tactics and revert to a strategy of protracted war, operate in smaller units and use hit-and-run tactics often aimed at economic targets.

The military advances made by the ESAF were impressive. The army markedly improved, particularly its ability to defend cuarteles (ESAF military post) and strategic targets. With the infusion of U.S. aid, the airforce provided airmobility to the troops, as well as helicopter and fixed-wing gunship support (Gruson, 1989). However, despite the ESAF's combat superiority, the army has failed to extend government control decisively into contested parts of the country. In 1991, the

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FMLN is operating with about 6,000 combatants and 50,000 active supporters (masas). It remains a powerful foe, capable of massing for large and spectacular attacks. In addition, the guerrillas act as the shadow government in at least a third of the country. As a result the situation is deadlocked - a stalemate within a protracted war.

A. APPLYING THE SYSTEMS MODEL

As was done in the previous case, we will now judge the counterinsurgent military strategy of the ESAF using the systems model of insurgency and counterinsurgency. This analysis concludes that the ESAF properly implemented a counterforce strategy during the 1981-1984 period when the FMLN was fighting in a semi-conventional manner. However, when the insurgents shifted tactics in 1985 and began to fight a prolonged war, the ESAF failed to shift to a counterproduction plan. The continuation of the counterforce strategy accounts for the failure to defeat the insurgency. To be sure, there were initiatives, often at the urging of the United States aimed at counterproduction. However, an examination of these efforts will show that these programs failed due to ESAF neglect and preoccupation with the counterforce effort. The result, after eleven years and 70,000 lives, is strategic stalemate.

1. An Output-Oriented Strategy

Unlike the British experience in Malaya, by the early 1980s the counterinsurgent forces in El Salvador were

confronted with a quasi-conventional conflict. Following the failure of the final offensive in 1981, the FMLN fell back into the countryside and conducted semi-conventional attacks on an increasingly beleaguered ESAF. Large FMLN units held the initiative and operated freely in many parts of the country, sometimes mounting attacks with as many as 600 men. Shortly after his arrival in September 1983, Ambassador Thomas Pickering noted:

> a three month period with roughly 85 separate guerrilla attacks of varying magnitudes but all significant to be worth reporting. A large share of them were partially or fully successful even from the Embassy's viewpoint. They may have had a 60, 70, or 80 percent success rate in that they did significant damage to army units caught off guard, perhaps managed to kill or wound a large number of government individuals, and were able to take over towns for a period of time. (Manwaring and Prisk, p. 144)

Against this backdrop the United States implemented its plan to expand, train, and equip the ESAF so that it could counter the insurgents.[1] The ESAF was transformed from a weak constabulary into a powerful army.

This new force was well suited to fight the large combat engagements common during 1981-1984 when insurgent strategy attempted to destroy the armed forces through large unit action. The larger, more capable ESAF, freshly armed with

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[1]This Plan was guided by an in-depth survey of the Salvadoran military conducted in the fall of 1981. Known as the Woerner Report, (after General Fred Woerner, Ret.) the plan outlined the force expansion, equipping, training, and modernization of the Salvadoran Army, Air Force and Navy.

M-16s, helicopter gunships, and artillery, was now able to engage the insurgents in large unit actions and prevail.

TABLE 1. ESAF FORCE STRUCTURE (Bacevich, p.5)

ESAF FORCE STRUCTURE									
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Troop Strength (includes security forces)	10.000	17.000	20.000	24.000	37.000	40.000	44.000	50.000	56.000
Maneuver Battalions	13	16	17	22	43	40	41	42	41
Fixed Wing Aircraft	28	28	22	21	25	38	42	49	63
Helicopters	5	5	13	17	28	32	47	67	72
Surface Naval Units	4	4	4	10	12	13	20	21	33

By 1985 the ESAF had averted defeat and forced the FMLN to revert to a strategy of protracted war, breaking down into smaller units. What developed within the ESAF was a military strategy which focused exclusively on outputs, or as one participant/analyst calls, "a strategy founded on combat firepower and maneuver." (Sheehan, 1989, p. 140) The ESAF was transformed into a conventional army, complete with artillery units and large immediate reaction battalions (BIRI). As Sheehan recalls:

> the BIRIs provided a great deal of firepower, flexibility, and mobility ideal for amassing decisive combat power on the conventional battlefield. For this purpose the strategy worked between 1982 and 1985. The direct military threat of the FMLN was greatly reduced. (Sheehan, p. 141)

Thus, for the semi-conventional phase of the war, the ESAF's output-oriented strategy was the appropriate one. The army was engaged in a fight for its life against a guerrilla force that had reached semi-conventional operations. To confront this foe the ESAF operated as a conventional army and eventually proved

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its superiority on the battlefield. But by 1985 the complexion of the war had changed. No longer fighting a semi-conventional force, the army now had to confront an enemy that reverted back to phase two insurgency. The FMLN sought refuge among the population, redoubled its efforts to build up the masas, and adapted its tactics by breaking its attack columns into small, twenty person groups that stayed highly foot mobile and assembled quickly for offensive column strikes. Because the insurgent strategy had changed, the counterforce strategy was no longer appropriate. To properly adapt to the new insurgent strategy, the ESAF should have modified its own plan, shifting from a conventional emphasis of targeting enemy forces to a counterinsurgent focus on controlling inputs and attacking FMLN subversion. This did not occur. Instead, the ESAF retained its conventional mindset, using its beefed up airforce and airmobile tactics to try to find and fix guerrilla units. The heavy reliance on airmobility when confronting an insurgency is especially curious after that strategy failed for the ESAF's sponsors (the United States) some twenty years earlier in Vietnam. As Krepinevich recounts:

> ...while the airmobile forces [in Vietnam] were busy searching for main-force units - they allowed the guerrilla to achieve his purpose: infiltration into the villages and subversion of the rural population. (Krepinevich, p. 125)

Even when the army finally reoriented its forces to conduct small unit operations, the primary emphasis remained fixed on guerrilla forces. Thus, the force established between 1981 and

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1986 became largely irrelevant to the conduct of the insurgent war. In the process of successfully avoiding a conventional defeat, the ESAF transformed itself into an army that was and remains incapable of winning at insurgency.

The Salvadoran military failed to adjust it strategy and adequately commit to the counterproduction war. This weak commitment resulted in the failure of those programs that did seek to attack this subversion. The remainder of this chapter will examine these programs and show how they failed due to ESAF neglect and preoccupation with its conventional combat strategy.

2. A Failure to Control Inputs and Attack Infrastructure

Compared to the Malayan case, the problem of isolating the inputs to the insurgency in El Salvador is more complex. Imposing a Malaya-like solution (attempting population and food control via resettlement) in El Salvador is not a viable option due to the high population density and the prohibitively high fiscal costs associated with such a move (Waghelstein, 1985, p. 14). The proper method to deny both people and food to the insurgents in El Salvador is not population control, but rather population protection. A strategy of population protection does not require the massive dislocation and costs associated with resettlement. It is relatively cheap to implement. Yet if executed correctly, it denies the insurgent contact with the people. The COIN

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strategy best suited for population protection is civil defense.

a. Civil Defense

Civil defense is not a new concept. As shown in the previous case, the Home Guard in Malaya played an important role in the defeat of the Chinese insurgency. In Vietnam, the short-lived civilian irregular defense groups (CIDG) program enjoyed considerable success. According to Krepinevich:

> by the end of 1962 the CIDG political action program had recovered and secured several hundred villages, some three hundred thousand civilians, and several hundred square miles of territory from the VC, utilizing some thirty eight thousand armed civilian irregulars. These people fought well... and had a record of almost unbroken success against the VC. (Krepinevich, p. 71)

The critical requirement in creating a civil defense force is to first establish at least nominal control over the insurgents in the area using regular army troops. Because civil defense forces are generally small and lightly armed, they cannot withstand sustained engagements with guerrilla regulars. Clear and hold operations must be conducted prior to the establishment of civil defense forces.

As a COIN tactic, civil defense has two primary objectives. It can be used to create static defense forces to defend communities from insurgent attack, and it can operate as a population control mechanism to deny civilian support to the insurgents, cutting the guerrillas off from their intelligence and logistics network. The first objective is

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accomplished by using civil defense as a local security force to repel the insurgents and reduce their freedom of movement. In this role, civil defense serves as a force multiplier, increasing the size of the armed forces. The second purpose is achieved by using civil defense as a population-control mechanism to collect intelligence and regulate the movement of civilians. This is the role that makes civil defense so valuable against an insurgency. A competent civil defense program serves as the counterinsurgent's eyes and ears. Because the unit lives in the village and observes the daily routine, it can closely monitor members of their town, collect intelligence on suspicious activities, and control the movement of food and merchandise. In this way, civil defense attacks guerrilla inputs by establishing a barrier between the population and the insurgents which cuts them off from their main source of supplies and information. Moreover, through the careful observation of the village's inhabitants, the civil defense unit can identify the individuals who are part of the insurgent infrastructure. Armed with this information, the Security Forces can arrest these supporters, interrogate them, and obtain information on the remaining cadre. Eventually, this will result in the rolling up of the guerrilla organization in that village.

In the Salvadoran context, an aggressive civil defense program would provide the means to deny inputs and attack the insurgent infrastructure. Unfortunately, the ESAF

efforts in this regard must be considered a failure. The ESAF has failed to devote the resources, interest, and energy to make civil defense effective, despite considerable pressure by the United States and one U.S. Military Group (USMILGP) commander who described civil defense as "the one solution that would save the program." (Bacevich, p. 40)

The creation of civil defense forces in El Salvador was complicated by the existence of an earlier militia-like organization known as the National Democratic Organization (ORDEN). In the 1970s, ORDEN evolved into the political rights' instrument of repression; it eventually became a death squad aimed at suspected opponents of the government. In the current conflict, this legacy has made some people reluctant to participate in the program. (U.S. military trainer, April 1991.)

Civil defense also suffered from organizational difficulties. Initially under the control of territorial services, it has undergone several reorganizations. Most recently it was put under the joint supervision of both territorial services and the ESAF. The territorial services officer is responsible for outfitting the units, but the key to their success is the brigade commanders who exercise operational control over the units in their areas and come to their aid with reinforcements if they are attacked. This uncoordinated management has had predictable results, as a recent analysis on civil military operations concludes:

Clearly, there is no centralized control, and what
training that has been received is minimal. Moreover,
there is little, if any, connection with regular forces,
self help projects, and national planning. As examples,
civil defense unit commanders are supposed to be able to
contact regular units by radio, but these forces may be as
far as 100 km away. There appears to be no national
planning applied down to the civil defense units. What is
done is apparently <u>ad hoc</u>... (SWORD, Feb. 1988, p. 16)[2]

The overwhelming impediment to successful implementation,
however, was the ESAF itself. The army never endowed civil
defense with a position alongside the other major directorates
in the EMC (ESAF high command). Excluded from membership and
thus lacking prestige and authority, the civil defense program
could not command the respect and attention of the field
officers whose job it was to make it work. Moreover, civil
defense was viewed as a waste of time by many brigade
commanders who would rather be killing guerrillas, or as a
"gringo" imposed program, one of the prices of continued U.S.
aid. Many openly disliked the program, feeling that the need
to arm "civilians" somehow stains the honor of the army.
Others felt it representeo an easy source of weapons for the
insurgents. These attitudes have doomed the civil defense
program to failure. (U.S. Military advisor, April 1991)

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[2]See also: Ana Montes, <u>Guatemala and El Salvador: Civil
Defense as a Counterinsurgency Tactic (U)</u>, Defense
Intelligence Agency, West Europe/Latin America Division,
Directorate of Research, November 1987 (SNF); and Charles L.
Armstrong (Lt Col), "Combined Action Program: Variations in El
Salvador," <u>Marine Corp Gazette, August 1990.</u>

Even if the program could achieve organizational unity and the support of the ESAF, its effect would be limited because it adopted too narrow a mission. Focusing on weapons familiarization and other military skills, it neglected the critical mission of intelligence collection and "gatekeeping" for the village which would impede and eventually destroy rebel covert activity. As a result, the insurgent infrastructure continues to garner the necessary inputs to fuel the insurgency. Observing the situation in 1988, a USSOUTHCOM analysis concluded:

> In the final analysis of a counterinsurgency campaign, the proper measures of success are those that relate to disruption or threat to the insurgent organization. In El Salvador, the insurgent leadership and organization remains relatively unchallenged. This component of the countersubversion dimension cannot be classified as anything but a failure. (SWORD, Feb. 1988, p. 22)

In sum, the ESAF has failed to use the best method available to it to defend the population and attack the insurgent system.

b. Refugees

Just as the army has failed to deny to the guerrillas the population in the villages, it has also failed to control or defend the people who have fled their villages to escape the fighting. This has been true throughout the war. Refugees are largely ignored or handled on an ad hoc basis by civilian and military authorities with little or no control over their movements or activities. Disregarded by the government, many fled to displaced person camps inside El

Salvador or to refugee camps in neighboring Honduras, where they fell under the firm control of the FMLN. As a reporter for the New York Times observed:

> ...the camps have taken on the character of a small, self-contained states, ruled by "coordination committees" of pro-guerrilla Salvadorans who wield almost absolute authority over their fellow refugees. (Uhlig, 1989)

To the chagrin of the ESAF, these camps became a rear area for the insurgents, providing recruits, a rest and relaxation center and a staging area for operations into Chalatenango and Morazan departments. The ESAF failure to handle refugees has returned to haunt them. In accordance with the 1987 regional peace plan which called for each signatory to facilitate the repatriation of refugees, the government has recently permitted the return of about 16,000 refugees from their camps along the Honduran-Salvadoran border. Through control of the refugee leadership and other groups, the FMLN manipulated the resettlement issue to put restraints on the ESAF, which is prohibited from entering the camps or even operating near them. The ESAF now sees the importance of refugees to the insurgents, but it is too late. Today, these refugee populations serve the same functions inside El Salvador as they did in Honduras, as guerrilla base camps, staging areas, and recruitment centers.

c. External Support

Internal sources of inputs are not the only problem for the ESAF. They have also failed to control the considerable external support the FMLN has enjoyed since the

beginning of the conflict. Through a sophisticated logistics network supported by the Sandinistas and Cubans, the FMLN received overseas training, medical and communications support, and tons of weapons, ammunition, and explosives. War material from Cuba and Nicaragua has arrived for over ten years via overland routes across Honduras (in trucks and cars), seaborne deliveries to the southeastern coast (canoes or fishing vessels), and light aircraft drops to any one of the many airfields used by crop dusters in Usulutan, San Miguel, or La Union departments. (Salvadoran officers, 1989) Long a point of contention between opponents and supporters of U.S. policy in El Salvador, massive external support to the FMLN can no longer be disputed. The refit of most of the insurgent combatants with AK-47 assault rifles (a weapon not in the ESAF inventory), the 25 November 1989 crash of a small plane from Nicaragua carrying 24 SA-7 surface-to-air missiles, and the 19 October 1989 Honduran seizure of a truck traveling from Nicaragua bound for El Salvador with arms, ammunition, and FMLN propaganda hidden in fake walls all point to an extensive covert logistics network which has supported the insurgency.[3] The total percentage of war material received from external sources is unknown, but some analysts have put the figure as high as eighty percent (SWORD, p. 7). Despite

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[3]See Lawrence J. Whelan, "Weapons of the FMLN," Institute for Research on Small Arms in International Security, v. I, pp. 1-6, August 1990; and Lindsey Gruson, "Plane in Salvador with Soviet Arms Crashes and 4 Die," The New York Times, I: 1:3, 26 November 1989.

the FMLN's heavy reliance on this support, the effort to impede and interdict it has never been a priority for the ESAF. This is evident in the inadequate funding and poor skills of the two services charged with countering the external support, the navy and the aduana (customs service).

Among its other responsibilities, the aduana is charged with inspecting all vehicles at border crossing points along the frontier with Honduras and Guatemala. Since the smuggling of war material in hidden compartments aboard cars and trucks is well known to the government, a thorough inspection effort to halt or impede these shipments would be expected. This is not case. Instead, the aduana's attempts to inspect vehicles and seize war material bound for the insurgents are ineffective. Trucks and cars alike are often waved through the checkpoints with only the most superficial inspections. As one U.S. trainer who made a survey of several such border crossing points reported, huge tractor-trailer rigs with refrigerated trailers were not checked at all because the inspectors did not have the proper cold weather clothing necessary to enter the trailers to search them (U.S. Military trainer, April 1991). Although not documented, corruption and intimidation by the insurgents also degrades unit performance. But the problems at these checkpoints are not overwhelming. In fact, they could easily be remedied with training and modest expenditures if the government was interested in doing so.

The other service associated with the interdiction mission is the El Salvadoran Navy (ESN). It is the smallest, least supported, and least influential component of the Salvadoran armed forces. Responsible for coastal patrol and interdiction, the ESN has about 20 boats capable of offshore operations. However, due to poor leadership, maintenance problems, and an extreme shortage of trained personnel, only a small number of boats are on patrol off the coast at any one time. Moreover, the operational and tactical practices of the navy are generally very poor. For example, boats anchor or drift at night, there is poor light and noise discipline, poor board and search procedures, and little or no training while underway. As a result, the navy has not been able to interdict one major arms shipment, and the southeastern coast is virtually wide open to seaborne resupply operations to the insurgents.[4]

Thus, the attack on inputs derived from external sources has never been seriously addressed by the ESAF. This support has been critical to the success and resilience of the FMLN throughout the war. The failure to address it is inexplicable, the consequences can be succinctly stated, "The [insurgent] may win without external support; the [government] is unlikely to win if he continues to receive it." (Leites and Wolf, p. 24)

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[4]These observations were made between February 1989 and February 1990 while I was assigned to the USMILGP, El Salvador.

Unlike the Briggs Plan in Malaya, which defeated the insurgents by attacking the communist organization in the populated areas, the strategy of maneuver has failed to isolate the insurgents from the population so that the infrastructure could be identified and attacked. The infrastructure remains intact and functioning. This is why the ESAF, which can go "anywhere they want to in the country" has not been able to defeat the insurgency. As a U.S. Defense Attache explains:

> The initiative consists of and is obtained only at such time as the military and security forces are successfully able to protect elected officials (they never were) and prevent interdiction of traffic (they never were). Prevent the guerrillas from coming in at night to various communities and propagandizing people or collecting war taxes or policing up young people for service with the guerrillas. The guerrillas were always able, right up to the time I left, to require people to grow cotton or to grow coffee. The guerrillas were determining the wage structure for the workers. The guerrillas were collecting a certain amount of money for every hectare that was planted... In other words, there was still a close interaction. Even though the guerrillas were reduced in numbers... they essentially had the same direct interface with the population whenever the military wasn't there to prevent it from happening. (Manwaring and Prisk, p. 345)[5]

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[5]Writing four years later in 1989, James LeMoyne of the New York Times makes the same point, "The guerrillas are the shadow government in a third of the country. In those areas, they expel peasants who oppose them, but work hard to provide security, schools, clinics and a sense of participation to their supporters. They have developed an effective tax-collection system, produce light weapons in their own factories, and maintain an extensive communications and spy network. So far, they have survived everything the army and its American advisors have thrown at them. (LeMoyne, 1989, p.57.)

Thus, as a result of the ESAF's neglect of programs aimed at the insurgent infrastructure, the programs failed and the guerrilla organization remains intact. The continued viability of the FMLN's organization accounts for the stalemate.

3. The Conversion Process is Ignored

As discussed in Chapter 1, the conversion process of an insurgency refers to the means of converting inputs into guerrilla forces and activities. The government needs to know how this organization operates if it is to destroy it. It is up to the intelligence services to pull the screen of secrecy away from the insurgency so that the COIN forces can attack it. In order to do this, the government must direct its intelligence organization correctly. Traditional intelligence collection on enemy order of battle (OB) (combat units, armament, location) is important, but of much greater importance is to acquire intelligence on the insurgent infrastructure. Intelligence must direct its information gathering efforts primarily on the infrastructure, not enemy troops. The opponent's infrastructure is the foundation of insurgency warfare. As Sir Robert Thompson noted, "if the intelligence organization is targeted on the infrastructure, it will get the order of battle as well, but if . .s targeted on the order of battle, it will not get the infrastructure." (Thompson, 1969, p. 166) Intelligence on the infrastructure allows COIN forces to root it out. Successfully attacking the insurgent leadership and organization results in the

elimination of centralized direction and control, fragmentation of the organizational infrastructure, and the ultimate destruction of the entire organization (SWORD, p. 22). The principle means of obtaining information on the insurgent organization is through human intelligence (HUMINT) [The development of agent networks and the interrogation of captured or surrendered personnel]. HUMINT provides the specific, detailed kind of information necessary to fracture the security of the subversive network so it can be attacked.

Like the operational forces, the Salvadoran intelligence organization is output-oriented. It has focused on the conventional OB designed to support counterforce operations and has failed to address the insurgent organization. In so doing, it addressed only the manifestation of the insurgency and overlooked its heart-- the leadership and guerrilla organization.

There are different reasons that account for the misdirection of the intelligence apparatus. The first is the natural tendency for conventional armies to focus on OB. Because ESAF commanders retain a conventional mindset, and the intelligence function is to support the operational commander, intelligence has stressed support to counterforce operations. This misplaced emphasis on OB intelligence was fueled by the U.S. application of a variety of sophisticated intelligence platforms designed to support its own forces in mid and high intensity conflicts. These platforms did exactly what they

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were designed to do, producing information on enemy forces. (Manwaring and Prisk, pp 310-316) What they did not and could not do is reveal the insurgent infrastructure operating in the cantones and caserios (small villages). Moreover, ESAF reliance on such technical systems began to foster a garrison mentality about intelligence collection. Salvadoran officers developed a belief that they did not have to go outside the cuartel to obtain intelligence on the enemy. They believed reports would come to them--prepackaged as intercepts and photographs. This mindset among ESAF officers seriously retarded the aggressive pursuit of HUMINT programs and the people-to-people contact that is indispensable when confronting an insurgency (U.S. Intelligence trainers, April 1991).[6] ESAF efforts to attack the infrastructure continue to be weak, despite a growing appreciation for the importance of HUMINT.

Because the intelligence effort has not focused on the insurgent organization, a complete understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the FMLN is lacking. This, in turn, has weakened the psychological operations campaign, which depends heavily on the full details of the insurgent infrastructure to discredit and neutralize the guerrilla leadership and organization.

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[6] Several U.S. trainers commented that the Salvadorans seemed to be "always waiting for the one intercept or interrogation report whose implications would be self evident, thereby reducing the need for analysis."

a. Psychological Operations

Psychological operations (psyops) aimed at the insurgent infrastructure are meant to reduce moral, increase internal conflicts, and discredit the organization. ESAF psychological operations have had mixed success at achieving these goals. At the strategic level, President Duarte's and Cristiani's tours of the United States and Western Europe have positively influenced heads of state, but the governments' overall effort to counter FMLN propaganda abroad has been weak. Likewise, at the tactical level, a recent money for arms campaign (<u>Plan Puente</u>), the armed forces radio station (Radio <u>Cuscatlan</u>), and a public relations effort against the guerrilla mine campaign have all yielded positive results. Despite these successes, the overall psychological operations effort, like the war itself, is stalemated. A recent study on psychological operations concludes, "Psyop is personality dependent and consists of individual, ad hoc, piecemeal, and uncoordinated efforts of four or five major players." (SWORD, Psychological Operations Assessment 4 Feb 1988, p. 4)

The final component in attacking the conversion process is the campaign against the guerrilla leadership. As Leites and Wolf suggest, it is generally more difficult for the insurgents to replace the high leadership than it is the rank-and-file, and therefore they represent a high value target to the government. In addition, to many people, the top leadership represents the insurgency's soul or center of

gravity. The elimina on of such an important element could be the decisive act that shows them the insurgency is no longer a viable option. As a USMIL⌐ᵖ commander explains:

> If we kill Villalobos or if we kill Shafik Handal or if we kill Leonel, they will be replaced-but they won't really be replaced. Villalobos has been out there since 1971 or 1972, and Shafik before him. They are, in many people's eyes, the revolution, if you will. The FMLN would have a very, very difficult time replacing them if they were gone. (Manwaring and Prisk, p. 435)

Despite the clear importance of this critical node, the ESAF has not made the targeting of the insurgent leadership a priority. The existence of specialized unit like the Patrulla de Reconocimiento de Alcance Largo (PRAL) suggests that the army has the unique weapons and training necessary to infiltrate guerrilla secure areas to capture or kill leaders. But they have either not exercised this capability or they have tried and failed. According to the same MILGP commander:

> to my knowledge, we haven't done a very good job of going after them [insurgent leaders]. To wit, I said,"I want pictures of those guys. I want to see who those people are that we are going after." I couldn't get those pictures from the Estado Mayor. I had to go to the U.S. intelligence community... Well if that is the case, its hard to argue that we really are targeting those guys or foc sing against them to any extent. (Manwaring and Prisk, p. 435)

4. Attempts to Harden the Government Go Soft

Just as the ESAF failed to attack the conversion process, it also neglected to give adequate attention to hardening itself against insurgent activity. As we have seen, the elements of a successful strategy for counterinsurgency

involve concentrating enough force to destroy or expel the main body of guerrillas so that the government can take control of the population, win its willing support, and eliminate the insurgent infrastructure. Some counterinsurgency planners understood this, and over the years three programs evolved. The National Campaign Plan (NCP), United to Reconstruct (UPR) and most recently Municipalities in Action (MIA) all sought to break the link between insurgent and the population. The hope was that sympathy for the guerrillas would evaporate as the government demonstrated its ability to protect the people and improve services. In the words of Leites and Wolf, the government must show a "demonstrated ability to complete announced programs, thereby certifying that it should govern because it is governing." (p. 37) But the ESAF did not deliver the fundamental requirement for these programs to succeed--basic security to the population. Security is defined as a populated geographic area where the insurgent organization is incapable of establishing support among the populace (Thornton, 1989, p. 10). The ongoing MIA program shows promise, largely due to direct funding to local authority, rather then through central government institutions. But this program also lacks an ESAF commitment to security. As NCP and UPR showed, efforts to improve the standard of living are irrelevant unless they also reduce the peoples' sense of insecurity.

The first attempt to harden the government was the
National Campaign Plan, initiated in San Vicente department in
June 1983 under the name Operation MAQUILISHUAT. According to
Bacevich:

> Focusing the attention of both the government and the
> armed forces on the single department of San Vicente, the
> concept of MAQUILISHUAT was an attractive one. A greatly
> improved troop presence, with battalions staying in the
> field rather than in the cuartel (ESAF military post),
> would saturate the department, clearing it of major FMLN
> concentrations. Behind this shield, a major combined
> civilian-military effort would recruit civil defense
> detachments, organize peasant cooperatives, reopen schools
> and medical clinics, restore local government, and conduct
> extensive civic-action projects. For its first hundred
> days, this ambitious project lived up to its promise. The
> Salvadorans made real headway; they seemed to have broken
> the code. Unfortunately, neither the armed forces nor the
> government could sustain the operation.
>
> By the fall of 1983, the extra battalions moved on and
> the government began promising other departments,
> particularly Usulutan, a share of improved services,
> thereby diluting the campaign's overall impact. The result
> was predictable: The guerrillas returned to San Vicente
> and obliterated MAQUILISHUAT's achievements. They overran
> civil defense outposts, forced the closure of schools and
> clinics, subverted the cooperatives, and chased officials
> loyal to GOES [Government of El Salvador] back to the
> safety of San Salvador. (p.44)[7]

Thus, the army's inability to secure the countryside condemned
the civic action to failure. The government tried again in
1986 with United to Reconstruct. Unlike the civilian run NCP,
this plan was controlled by the ESAF and instituted in each of
the 14 departments. It too failed, largely due to the

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[7]For an examination of the National Campaign Plan and the
U.S. Counterinsurgency strategy behind it, see Victor Manuel
Rosello, Jr., An Assessment of the National Campaign Plan for
El Salvador: Planning for Success or Failure? Master's Thesis,
University of Chicago, March 1984.

unwillingness of brigade commanders to commit men and resources to the program and because the establishment of a UPR zone in every department made it virtually impossible to attain the necessary level of troop superiority (Austin and others, 1988, p. 9).

These programs failed because the ESAF did not have the strength both to maintain security indefinitely in the target area and maintain their output-oriented approach. Even if the army was able to hold one area, the ESAF strategy could not provide the additional strength to replicate a success in other areas. Here we see the ramifications of adopting the wrong COIN strategy. Had the army fully supported the tactics of counterproduction, such as the creation of civil defense units, they could provide security to the project areas and have sufficient forces to respond to insurgent activities. Because they did not, efforts to gain the people's support and increase government control over them failed.

B. ACCOUNTING FOR FAILURE

The conflict is El Salvador has reached a stalemate. The principal reason for this stalemate is the ESAF's failure to change its battleplan from a counterforce to a counterproduction strategy when the insurgnts reverted to prolonged war in 1985. Attempts were made to confront the subversion, but they have all failed due to ESAF neglect and preoccupation with its ineffective plan. The result is an army

that "can go anywhere it wants to" but cannot control the country due to a largely untouched guerrilla infrastructure.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

A. EXPLAINING SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Why did the counterinsurgent forces win in Malaya, and why are they stalemated in El Salvador? The answer lies in what they did.

In Malaya, the British campaign focused on denying inputs to the insurgent system and attacking the infrastructure. They did this through a resettlement program and food control measures. The efficiency of the insurgent organization was reduced through rewards for surrender and psychological campaigns, and the government was hardened through a tailored economic development program and the creation of the Home Guards. As we have seen, this is precisely the counsel of the systems model of counterinsurgency. The systems model suggests that waging successful counterinsurgency requires that primary attention be devoted to a counterproduction effort (denying inputs and attacking the organization) rather than a counterforce effort (attacking outputs). The tactics used by the British fit the prescriptions of the systems, and this approach can account for the success in Malaya.

The Salvadoran experience was much different. The ESAF has thus far failed to defeat the FMLN because they have not adopted the appropriate COIN strategy. The army's campaign was primarily one of employing counterforce to insurgent outputs.

This focus on insurgent forces was the appropriate approach during the 1981-1984 period when the war was in a semi-conventional phase. During this period, the ESAF required a force structure and strategy that allowed them to confront large guerrilla units that posed a direct military threat to the army and government. By 1985, however, the FMLN had lost the capability to militarily defeat the ESAF and changed its strategy, returning to revolutionary guerrilla warfare. This style of fighting depends heavily on the structures through which the movement's supporters in the population can be mobilized to assist in the insurgent effort. This infrastructure provides the manpower pool required to replace guerrilla losses, critical logistics support to the guerrilla fighters, advance information on army force movements, and concealment when the insurgent forces need to disperse rapidly. In the face of the FMLN's strategic shift, the ESAF did not modify its own strategy to attack this structure, which is the approach advocated by the systems model. Instead, it continued to emphasize insurgent outputs. In doing so it missed the infrastructure and addressed only the manifestations of the insurgency, rather than the insurgency's capacity to reproduce. The ESAF strategy was condemned to fight the insurgency at the margin, chasing and sometimes catching small guerrilla units, or killing others in the process of beating back an attack on a <u>cuartel</u> or economic

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target. The failure to adopt the correct COIN strategy accounts, in large measure, for the ESAF's failure to defeat the insurgency.

The ESAF counterforce strategy was manifest in two ways. First, it was marked by the continued emphasis on the highly mobile and heavily armed BIRIs, the smaller anti-terrorist battalions (BIAT), and the offensive punch of the gunships and attack planes of the airforce. The BIRIs operate as reaction forces, augmenting forces in an area or operating independently of the department's brigade commander. When the operation is completed they move to another troublespot or target, often in another part of the country. These units rarely remain in an area long enough to develop the HUMINT nets necessary to penetrate the insurgent organization. The same is true of the BIATs, which make up the majority of the ESAF units. These units are rotated to different areas within their brigade's area of operations every thirty days, preventing the development of information on the guerrilla infrastructure. The counterforce strategy resulted in an army that was organized and operated in a way that did not allow for a COIN effort against inputs or infrastructure.

The fixation on insurgent outputs is further revealed in the poor support in terms of men, material, and command attention that the ESAF and the Estado Mayor has given to those programs that have attempted to deny inputs and target the organization. Attempts to deny the insurgents key inputs,

such as refugees and foreign material support, were never made a priority by the ESAF. This was and still is apparent by the weaknesses and lack of attention the _aduana_ and navy receive. Similarly, the crucial task of defending the population and attacking the insurgent infrastructure was bungled because the ESAF never accepted the civil defense program as their own. Psychological operations targeted against the insurgents were ad hoc, the little effort that has been devoted to such operations has been made at the brigade level. There is no capacity at all to carry out psyops at the individual battalion level, exactly the place where the war was and is being fought.

The result of these failings are clear: the insurgent organization remains intact and capable of regenerating new forces faster than the ESAF has been able to kill them. The failure to follow the prescriptions of the systems model accounts for the stalemated prolonged war in El Salvador.

B. FACTORS PREVENTING ESAF's USE OF THE MODEL

Having attributed ESAF failure to the wrong COIN strategy, let us examine some possible reasons why the right strategy was not adopted. Possible explanations will be divided into two categories: the first drawn from conditions internal to the ESAF, the second from conditions external to the army.

1. Internal Factors

The first factor relates to the tradition of the Salvadoran army. Historically, the El Salvadoran army has been

"conventionally minded," oriented to protect the national territory from foreign rather than internal attack. The 1969 Soccer War with Honduras was fought in a conventional manner and reinforced this mindset. Despite the counterinsurgency training received from U.S. schools in Panama since the late 1950's, the lessons did not "take" (Waghelstein, p. 35). As Waghelstein observed:

> ...the inculcation of counterinsurgency as the most likely form of warfare simply did not occur. This army, with few exceptions, had no experience in... the type of war in which the civilian population... was the objective. When asked why, after more than two decades of exposure to counterinsurgency techniques, there was still so much resistance to implementing them, the responses were invariably, "We never thought it could happen here," and "The only war our leaders ever fought was the conventional one with Honduras." (Waghelstein, p. 35-36)

This conventional mindset has arguably prevented Salvadoran officers from seeing the insurgency as a different kind of threat, one that required a different kind of strategy. The ESAF leadership, drawing from their experience in Honduras, believed that the FMLN posed a related conventional problem. Their conventional frame of reference, in short, prevented them from seeing the importance of attacking the whole organization, rather than just a part of it.

Another possible explanation for not approaching the insurgency as a challenge relates to the tanda system of officer promotions. As each tanda (class) of officers is graduated from the military academy, it is promoted together through the ranks. An individual officer's performance or initiative is largely irrelevant to his promotion, and his

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career is secure through the rank of colonel. Within a system that guarantees promotions, one of the few ways that they could be lost is through the advocacy or practice of what would appear to be a high risk strategy. The systems model, with its emphasis on counterproduction versus counterforce targeting, troop dispersion, small unit tactics, etc. would certainly appear to be a risky proposition to such officers. All the more so given their strong conventional orientation. The tanda system has arguably made the ESAF officer risk adverse, and therefore unwilling to advocate or practice a counterinsurgent strategy which "never took" with their superiors.

2. External Factors

One possible external impediment to the implementation of a counterproduction strategy has do with the ESAF's past record of human rights abuses and the delicate dynamic of U.S. aid. The systems model advocates an attack on the covert infrastructure which supports the guerrilla combatant with food, war material, and information. In many instances, this infrastructure is made up of "civilians" who, although they are active participants in the effort to overthrow the government, may not be armed in the process of carrying out their appointed duties. A COIN campaign which targets this structure must be careful to operate in accordance with the rule of law. A COIN force employing the systems model must be prepared to use discriminate force based on good intelligence.

It cannot abuse it authority by beatings, torture, and murder
of suspected cadre and insurgent supporters. As Thompson
noted, "A government which does not act in accordance with the
law forfeits the right to be called a government and cannot
then expect its people to obey the law." (Thompson, p. 52)

In El Salvador, the ESAF and the Security Forces have
a long history of acting outside the law. In the 1970s and
early eighties the armed forces and death squads associated
with them were responsible for thousands of deaths. The 16
November 1989 slaying of six Jesuit priests by elements of the
ESAF indicate this legacy is not fully behind them. Against
this history is balanced the political dynamic of U.S. aid to
El Salvador. The government depends heavily on this aid, which
over the last ten years has exceeded $4 billion (Krauss, p.1).
Security assistance to the Salvadoran government is a highly
divisive issue in the U.S. Congress which approves it. This,
coupled with a tightly orchestrated FMLN propaganda campaign
through an extensive network of FMLN support groups in the
United States makes any ESAF misstep a potential aid-stopper.
The political dynamic of continued U.S. aid is highly
dependent on ESAF good behavior. Without it, pressure to
suspend or cancel aid from the Congress, FMLN support groups,
and the international community would be intense. Should an
ESAF attempt to root out the insurgent infrastructure in an
FMLN-controlled refugee camp, for example, result in the death
of a civilian, the FMLN could well mobilize a public outcry in

Washington. With emotions running high, congressmen who oppose aid to the ESAF might, under these circumstances, succeed in mobilizing the votes to end U.S. support. Given the political realities of the bloody legacy of the ESAF and its dependence on uncertain U.S. support, a strategy targeted against the insurgent infrastructure may in fact appear untenable.

A final factor relates to U.S. assistance itself. Security assistance to El Salvador arrives in the form of weapons, military equipment, military trainers, and other support designed to help the ESAF to defeat the FMLN. Ideally, this assistance is appropriate to combating an insurgency, and helps to create a COIN-minded army and military strategy. Unfortunately, it appears the opposite is true. The "Colonel's Report" found that "Despite the oft-expressed American intent to convert the ESAF into a counterinsurgent force, U.S. policy has failed to wean the Salvadorans from their conventional mindset. If anything, American actions have reinforced that bias." (Bacevich, p. 29) An analysis by a former military trainer makes a similar point when he shows that only four of the fifty-five U.S. military trainers assigned to El Salvador during his tenure were designated for psychological, civil defense or civic action operations. (Sheehan, p. 139) The Salvadoran military may have failed to commit the necessary resources to the appropriate COIN strategy because their American sponsors were not committed to it themselves.

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Perhaps the best explanation is the combination of the ESAF prediliction for conventional operations with the U.S. tendency to encourage such behavior. Because the ESAF saw itself as a conventional force, it wanted the hi technology weaponry that its sponsor was willing to provide. The acquisition of artillery, the demand for more and more helicopters, and the eThe ESAF was not interedsted in a low tech war, as advocated by the model, which requires the HUMINT networks, careful analysis, and the tedious work of putting together a "wiring diagram" of an insurgent organization. They preferred to fly over the heads of the population in their U.S. supplied helicopters rather than operater in the villages where the insurgent infrastructure flourished.

What these points do suggest, however, is the true complexity of any counterinsurgent campaign. The model offers sound principles for the military component of a COIN strategy. But future counterinsurgency planners and analysts must be prepared to go beyond the model if necessary. They must anticipate any external political problems that may affect the prosecution of a counterinsurgency campaign and be prepared to deal with them. This is a logical suggestion for further research into the problem. Future analysts may wish to examine and possibly broaden and better "operationalize" the systems model of insurgency and counterinsurgency, and make it an even more valuable tool to be used against future groups threatening a government with internal war.

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    APO Miami 34023-0008

12. LTC Jim Diehl   1
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    Special Operations -- Low Intensity Conflict
    Room 2B 525, The Pentagon
    Washington, D.C. 20301-2500

13. Mr. Robert Sprague   1
    Senior Analyst
    Joint Intelligence Center
    U.S. Southern Command
    APO Miami 34003

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